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ABSTRACT

The Education General Studies curriculum at North Carolina State University is a useful alternative to the teacher education curricula. Because it separates decisions about graduation from certification recommendations, the education general studies curriculum provides the faculty with an honorable alternative to allowing marginal and weak candidates to enter the teaching force. At the same time, it provides certain students with a legitimate opportunity to earn a college degree in education, without forcing them to go through the student teaching experience. Education General Studies was originally conceived of as an "escape valve" for teacher education students who did not want to be teachers or who the faculty felt did not have the potential to be effective teachers. The program also serves those students who eventually wish to complete a certification program in another institution. A small number of students are interested in this program who are looking for a job for which an education degree provides appropriate preparation, but which does not require teacher certification. An outline of the Education General Studies curriculum is included with this paper. (JD)

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EDUCATION GENERAL STUDIES: GRADUATION WITHOUT CERTIFICATION

Separating the Baccalaureate Degree from Teacher Certification

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EDUCATION GENERAL STUDIES: GRADUATION WITHOUT CERTIFICATION

Separating the Baccalaureate Degree
from Teacher Certification

Institutional needs, faculty needs, and student needs frequently combine to produce ineffective teachers and subsequent damage to the reputation of teacher education. Several states and institutions are pursuing mechanisms designed to raise the quality of new teachers.

The institutional need to maintain enrollment (and therefore budget levels and faculty positions) sometimes leads to floating admissions requirements--floating upward when applications are plentiful and ebbing downward when applications drop off. The institutional need to serve certain groups sometimes results in an open admissions policy. The institutional need to avoid being left behind by a competing institution leads to program duplication, sometimes accompanied by dilution of standards.

Each of these practices is a threat to the quality of teacher education and its image. The writer recently heard a Dean of Education say, "In order to bolster education enrollments, my president told me to recruit the rejects from the School of Nursing."

Faculty needs include maintaining sufficient enrollment in each specific program to protect positions. Grades have been inflated to ensure that students remain eligible to continue. Advisers become emotionally attached to some of their weak students. They either overlook glaring deficiencies or believe that next semester will be when the student "gets it all together." When the time for student teaching arrives and the student is still deficient, then the student teaching

experience offers hope that the student will "get it all together." Not to get a good grade (A or B) in student teaching would reflect negatively on the university supervisor, so the marginal student blossoms. Having gone this far, it would be cruel for the faculty to deny the student graduation. Result: one more teacher of doubtful potential on the market.

Student needs have a wide range, as will be cited in later paragraphs. These needs tend to group into the need for a college degree--any degree--and the need for a job to fall back on until something better comes along. Neither of these categories is conducive to producing committed teachers of quality.

Egbert (1980), in his AACTE inaugural address, said "..... each of us should accept responsibility for ensuring that our graduates are a credit to education and that they are qualified to teach and to serve as models for their students."

FACING THE PROBLEM

Ten years ago, the School of Education at North Carolina State University was faced with the problem other teacher education institutions often face: What is the responsible action for both the student and the profession when the teacher education senior doesn't meet certification standards, or when the teacher education senior is no longer interested in student teaching? It did not seem quite fair to deny graduation, especially when the student had earned a respectable grade point average. Yet institutional integrity was also at issue. There was an obligation to the public not to certify students who had little or no promise of becoming effective teachers, or who did not desire to become teachers.

The faculty in some programs had evolved a solution which was not really satisfactory. They assigned a grade of C in student teaching to a few students who would agree not to pursue certification. Since 96 percent of our student teachers received an A or B grade for their practicum experience, a C grade was clearly an indication of inadequate performance for certification--yet a marginal level of performance had been achieved. The student was eligible to graduate, and the faculty members were not pressured to recommend certification. But what if the student later demanded certification? The University Catalog indicates that C is average. The Dean of the School of Education alerted the faculty that he could not support them if such a case were brought to him for adjudication.

Therefore, a curriculum was designed and implemented which separated graduation from certification. Students in this curriculum are not required to complete student teaching, but instead take additional coursework in order to meet degree requirements. Such students graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Education, but are not eligible for teacher certification--and they know this when they enter the curriculum. Education General Studies is not general education in the liberal arts tradition.

FIRST EMPHASIS

Education General Studies was originally conceived of as an "escape valve" for teacher education students who did not want to be teachers or who the faculty felt did not have the potential to be effective teachers. Several cases illustrate this situation:

(a) The student teacher who came back to campus after two weeks and said, "I just can't bring myself to tell them what to do."

(b) The student teacher who was caught with illegal drugs in front of his high school students;

(c) Some scholarship athletes in their fourth or fifth year who really didn't want a teaching career;

(d) Some School of Engineering students who had done poorly and were trying to get into the Industrial Arts Education curriculum, as a way to earn a degree. (They had completed all the industrial arts program requirements except student teaching, but were not allowed to transfer into the School of Education until their GPA was 2.25 or higher.) Many of these students were attracted to the technical and shop courses, but were not interested in teaching;

(e) An industrial arts education student with a serious stutter; and

(f) Teacher education students with satisfactory GPAs who did not possess other characteristics judged to be important to teaching.

There were also a few students who had bounced from institution to institution, or from curriculum to curriculum on our campus. They had no commitment to teacher education, but they saw education as their best opportunity to obtain a degree. They were usually supporting themselves financially, and were sometimes part-time students. When they came upon a job, or the promise of a job, which required a college degree--any college degree--they became motivated to complete graduation requirements.

The non-certification Education General Studies program became a solution for these students. The curriculum display in this emphasis is

very much like that leading to teacher certification. The three components are the traditional ones of general education, a teaching field major, and professional education. But instead of the student teaching semester capping the professional education component, the students take two independent study courses in education and a three-course sequence of supporting electives as shown in Figure 1. These courses may support either the major or be in professional education.

Figure 1 About Here

SECOND EMPHASIS

N. C. State University offers neither an elementary teacher education program, nor art, music, physical education, nor special education baccalaureates. Yet there are a few students who want to major in one of these programs. There are, however, three other senior colleges with some or all of these programs in Raleigh, and another six institutions within an hour's driving time. For institutions which have other IHEs nearby, or which can work out a cooperative agreement with another institution, this emphasis offers a broader curriculum without unnecessary duplication of course offerings.

In order to serve those students who eventually wish to complete a certification program in another institution, the junior and senior years of emphasis one were modified, as shown in Figure 2. The teaching field major of 30 semester hours and the 9 hours of supporting electives were replaced by a combination of 18 semester hours at another institution and 18 additional hours in education and psychology, plus a second speech course. This allows the student to complete most of his/her specific teaching field requirements at the other institution. Some of the additional education or psychology courses could also be completed at the other

institution. The student always has the additional option of transferring to the other institution, instead of remaining at N. C. State through graduation. The students are responsible for establishing arrangements with the other institution, for keeping up with the degree requirements of both institutions, and for obtaining approval for transfer credit in either direction.

Figure 2 About Here

THIRD EMPHASIS

Another small number of students are interested in a job for which an education degree provides an appropriate preparation, but which does not require teacher certification. Such jobs can be found in day care centers, the prison system, a YMCA or YWCA, business or industry, and as a teacher aide. One recent graduate was interested in a library science master's program; another wanted a physical education master's program which would lead her to a position as a college tennis coach. Both saw the Education General Studies curriculum as an appropriate baccalaureate degree for their career goals. In this emphasis, the teaching field component is replaced by additional courses in education and psychology, and the three-course sequence of supporting courses is changed to three specified courses in sociology, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 About Here

OTHER FEATURES

The Education General Studies curriculum enrolls from 16-25 students, requiring one advisor. Three-to-five students per year have graduated

from it recently. (To see it in perspective, N. C. State has had 80-90 student teachers per year recently.) The program also serves as a temporary home for a few undecided students. They are usually new freshmen and new transfer students who stay in it two or three semesters while they are searching for a major, not necessarily in education. EGS is administered by a department which has no undergraduate teacher certification programs.

This curriculum has also served an investigative function for the school. When the national decline in teacher education enrollment was gaining momentum, EGS provided an opportunity to "test the market" as to whether there might be a substantial number of students who were interested in education, but not in teacher certification. Their interest might be in the study of education as a discipline or in job opportunities other than public school teaching. Without advertising and without additional faculty resources, the curriculum has been judged successful as an alternative degree program for a small number of students.

Although there is potential, there are no plans to develop Education General Studies into a recruiting tool to boost enrollment, or into a broad-based human services training program. The human resource development option in the Psychology Department already performs that function. The education faculty is not reaching out to expand into the human service market, but individual students may do so if it serves their purposes. This seems to offer a middle ground between the extremes described by Watts (1980).

Many of our teacher education graduates are not limited to public school teaching positions, but are eagerly recruited by other employers. The students know this, and the market affects their decisions. For those not committed to public school teaching, the student teaching semester is

not appealing: perhaps their potential public school pupils are better off not to have a student teacher who is there only to meet an institutional requirement.

SUMMARY

The Education General Studies curriculum at N. C. State University is a useful alternative to the teacher certification curricula. Because it separates decisions about graduation from certification recommendations, it provides the faculty with an honorable alternative to allowing marginal and weak candidates to enter the teaching force. At the same time, it provides certain students with a legitimate opportunity to earn a college degree in education, without forcing them to go through a student teaching experience. The curriculum provides more teacher certification opportunities than the host institution can support, and illustrates that job opportunities for education graduates are much broader than many people usually assume. After nearly ten years of implementation, we are satisfied that the curriculum has been worth the development and implementation efforts put into it, and that it has been a factor in improving the quality of teacher education graduates. It is successfully meeting institutional, faculty, and student needs.

References

Egbert, R. L. Excellence in education. Journal of Teacher Education, March - April, 1980, 31 (2), 6.

Watts, D. Teacher education: For teachers only. Journal of Teacher Education, September - October, 1980, 31 (5), 11-13.

Figure 1

Education General Studies

First Emphasis: Students Formerly in a Teacher Education Program

Freshman Year

Courses	Credits	Courses	Credits
English 111	3	English 112	3
Mathematics	3-4	Math/Stat/Comp. Sci.	3
HI 205 of 243	3	HI 233 or 244	3
PSY 200	3	SOC 202	3
PE	1	Pol. Sci./Econ.	3
	13-14	PE	1
			16

Sophomore Year

Literature	3	Literature	3
Natural Science (with lab)	4	Fine Arts	3
		Natural Science	4
PHI 205	3	Education: Introduction	3
Pol. Sci./Econ.	3	Speech	3
Elective	3	PE	1
PE	1		17
	17		

Junior Year

Elective	3	ED 296	3
ED 344 (School and Society)	3	(Special Topics)	
		PSY 376, 475, or 476	3
PSY 304 (Educational Psychology)	3	Teaching field	6
		Supporting Elective	3
Teaching field	6		15
Supporting Elective	3		
	18		

Senior Year

ED 496 (Senior Seminar)	3	Elective	3
		Supporting Elective	3
Elective	3	Teaching field	9
Teaching field	9		15
	15		

Total Hours Required: 126

Figure 2

Education General Studies

Second Emphasis: Certification Through Cooperating Institutions

Junior Year

Courses	Credits	Courses	Credits
Elective	3	ED 296 (Special Topics)	3
ED 344 (School and Society)	3	PSY 376, 475, or 476	3
PSY 304 (Educational Psychology)	3	ED or PSY Elective	3
PSY 310 or 320	3	Course at cooperating institution	3
SP 213	3	Course at cooperating institution	3
ED or PSY Elective	3		
	18		15

Senior Year

ED 420 (Introduction to Guidance)	3	ED 483 (Introduction to Instructional Media)	3
ED or PSY Elective	3	ED 496 (Senior Seminar)	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
Course at cooperating institution	3	Course at cooperating institution	3
Course at cooperating institution	3	Course at cooperating institution	3
	15		15

Total Hours Required: 126

Figure 3

Education General Studies

Third Emphasis: Students Preparing for Non-Certified Positions in Education

Junior Year

Courses	Credits	Courses	Credits
ED 344 (School and Society)	3	ED 296 (Special Topics)	3
PSY 304 (Educational Psychology)	3	PSY 376, 475, or 476	3
ED (PHI) 304 (Philosophy of Education)	3	PSY 310 or 320	3
SOC 305	3	ED or PSY Elective	3
Elective	3	SOC 311	3
ED or PSY Elective	3		15
	18		

Senior Year

ED 420 (Introduction to Guidance)	3	SOC 418	3
ED 483 (Introduction to Instructional Media)	3	ED or PSY Elective	3
Elective	3	ED or PSY Elective	3
ED or PSY Elective	3	Elective	3
ED 496 (Senior Seminar)	3	Speech Elective	3
	15		15

Total Hours Required: 126